



Dear Santa, Love, Rachel Rosenstein

Amanda Peet , Andrea Troyer , Christine Davenier (Illustrator)

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"a lovely and pointed reminder that America is a land of many 'great holidays.'"—*Publishers Weekly*

Rachel Rosenstein is determined to celebrate Christmas this year—and the fact that her family is Jewish is not going to stop her. In a series of hilarious and heartwarming mishaps, Rachel writes a letter to Santa explaining her cause, pays him a visit at the mall, and covertly decorates her house on Christmas Eve (right down to latkes for Santa and his reindeer). And while Rachel may wrestle with her culture, customs, and love of sparkly Christmas ornaments, she also comes away with a brighter understanding of her own identity and of the gift of friends and family.

"will help introduce young readers to other cultures while allowing them to preserve the magic of their own."—*Booklist*

"There's lots of humor in the text ("Dear Santa...I know that you are a fair person and will not mind that I am Jewish. After all so was Jesus, at least on his mother's side") and in the lively, scribbly, colorful illustrations. But the authors wisely don't gloss over Rachel's feelings—which can be common for *anyone* who doesn't celebrate Christmas that time of year."—*The Horn Book*

Dear Santa, Love, Rachel Rosenstein Details

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Author : Amanda Peet , Andrea Troyer , Christine Davenier (Illustrator)

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From Reader Review Dear Santa, Love, Rachel Rosenstein for online ebook

Pam says

I liked the message in most of this book. Rachel is Jewish but wants to celebrate Christmas like her friends. She prepares for Santa (who doesn't come) and is disappointed. Her parents have a small role in explaining their faith traditions (could be better). She connects with other classmates toward the end of the story and a brief explanation is given as to why they don't celebrate Christmas either. The end page is funny but I think it dilutes the message of the book.

Tatiana says

Never have I witnessed so much hubbub over the last page of a picture book! (Perhaps except *It's a Book.*)

Young Rachel doesn't mind being Jewish throughout the year, but at Christmas time, it's hard to be left out of the holiday cheer. Thus, she schemes and schemes, doing all she can to lure Santa to the Rosenstein abode on Christmas Eve night, not noticing the havoc her red, white, and green fever wrecks on her mother, father, and sister. Rachel must put things right, and along the way, she learns that Jewish people are not the only ones who celebrate their own traditions in their own special ways.

And it could have stopped right there, with that message of diversity. But it went a page too far, seeming to imply that Christmas is still the #1 festivity. Maybe for some that is how it feels, yet why end on a note so sour? It perpetuates the Jewish lifestyle as lesser in the mainstream world, that Christmas children are somehow happier.

I prefer Shmelf the Hanukkah Elf on this topic, though debate swirls around that one, too. It's ironic because I grew up with this situation in reverse--longing to tap into my Jewish roots while we swapped gifts from under the tree. Oh well, you know what they say about the grass on the other side of the fence...

Susan says

This is a cute story about a Jewish girl who wants Santa to visit her house but I had two concerns with it: 1) she puts out latkes with chocolate chips for Santa and the dog is pictured about to eat them (NO chocolate for you, fictional dog!) and 2) I felt the ending should have been more affirming of the main character and her Jewish identity. I really liked the resolution but I felt that the final page undermined the positive message about different holidays being fun in their own way.

Baby Bookworm says

This review was originally written for The Baby Bookworm. Visit us for new picture books reviews daily!

Hello, friends! It's the second day of our holiday countdown, and also the last night of Hanukkah! To celebrate, we're reading *Dear Santa, Love, Rachel Rosenstein*, written by Amanda Peet and Andrea Troyer and illustrated by Christine Davenier.

Nobody loves Christmas more than Rachel. The twinkling lights, the beautiful decorations, and especially Santa – Rachel looks forward to each year. She wants to join in the Yuletide traditions too, but there's just one problem: Rachel's family is Jewish. Most of the year, she loves being Jewish and practicing her family's traditions, but at Christmastime, she feels jealous of all the fuss made over a holiday that she's not allowed to celebrate. This year, Rachel has a plan: if her parents won't celebrate Christmas, she'll take her request to Santa himself. Surely he will understand her wish to be part of Christmas?

To be honest, this one was kind of heavy – spoiler: Rachel does not get her Christmas wish – but also refreshingly honest and thought-provoking. With the way Christmas can become over-saturated in the weeks and months before, it's easy to understand why Rachel would feel left out. It's a harsh truth, but leads to a great conclusion: Rachel meets with friends of other faiths and cultures who are not celebrating Christmas, and begins to understand that all traditions and holidays are important and special, even if Christmas gets all the attention. It's also a nice touch that the book leaves little ones with permission to be jealous of that fact – it's an unfortunate byproduct of our culture, and it's nice that the story validates their frustration. The illustrations are very cute and well-detailed, yet support a complex story well. The length is fine, and JJ enjoyed it. A fantastic story to help children who might struggle during this time of year, and we really liked it. Baby Bookworm approved!

Be sure to check out The Baby Bookworm for more reviews!

Juliana Lee says

Rachel Rosenstein does not celebrate Christmas, even though she would really like to get lots and lots of presents from Santa. So she makes a secret plan and writes him a letter. On Christmas Eve she decorates her house with paper stars and strings of popcorn. She even puts chocolate chips in the latkes so they'll look like cookies. But the next morning, Rachel is disappointed to see that Santa did not come. That night, her family goes to the Chinese restaurant and Rachel is surprised to see many of her classmates there. Lucy Deng celebrated Chinese New Year and Amina Singh celebrates Diwali. This makes Rachel feel better on missing out on Christmas, but she still feels a tiny bit bad.

<http://julianaleewriter.com/books-ali...>

Mary Elenburg says

A great book, not only for Jewish children, but for all children. It helps to explain that not all children celebrate Christmas, and that other children may celebrate other religious holidays. In the book, Rachel so much wanted to celebrate Christmas and for Santa to come. The book reminded me of when we lived a mostly Jewish community. My daughter had a Jewish teacher, and most of her classmates were Jewish. She knew that the teacher and a great number of her classmates were not coming to school the next day due to it being a Jewish holiday. She begged to stay home, pointing out that our name even sounded Jewish. She was

very disappointed when I made her go to school the next day. Dear Santa, Love Rachel Rosenstein , would have been the perfect book to have read to my young daughter that day.

Margaux says

Rachel loves being Jewish most of the year, but when Christmas came around, "Rachel felt like a kid in a candy store with no mouth."

HA

This is actually a really cute book about appreciating one's own winter holidays (whether they're Hanukkah like Rachel celebrates or another holiday like Chinese New Year). It handily deals with the idea that Christmas is a big event nonetheless, and I was pleased that there wasn't a tidy ending. It's ok to "feel a bit bad," after all we each have our own big celebration days.

Emily Scheinman says

I am a huge fan of Christine Davenier's artwork. Her illustrations contribute a great deal to the storyline of a young Jewish girl hopeful Santa will visit their home for Christmas.

Doreen says

!Wonderful! story addressing being Jewish during the Christmas holiday season. It's sweet and fun! I picked it up because I noticed that the author is Amanda Peet, an actress currently starring in 'Brockmire'; a show that I LOVE!

I recommend this book to all children, Jewish and non-Jewish. As an adult, I definitely enjoyed it!

Erica says

This book starts out well with all the right messages about holidays, but it ends poorly. It's awesome that kids can learn about all the different holidays besides Christmas, but if I were a Jewish kid having read this book, the last page would have been such a bummer. It should have ended on a high note and omitted that last page all together.

Jillian says

I really, really, really wanted to love this book. I even held it up to a coworker and announced that I was going to love it.

Alas, it was ruined by the last page. After a whole book building up to the "it's okay to have another holiday

to celebrate, be proud of your heritage" lesson, we end on a "but Christmas is awesome and you should be sad you're not part of it."

Not to mention that Rachel's parents do very little to help their daughter through what is undoubtedly a tough time in most Jewish kids' lives - just giving a flat "no" to her requests, and doing no on-page explaining of the *why* we don't do Christmas.

Christmas is going to be hard enough in my house once we have kids of the right age - my parents are already going to be pushing the holiday on them; I don't need this book telling them they should be sad for not doing Christmas too.

(On a personal note - I appreciated the nod to tradition with saying the blessings just like grandpa's grandpa's grandpa, but it hit kind of a sour note for me, as a convert, knowing my kids won't even have *that* consolation.)

Jess says

The last page completely obliterates the message of this otherwise very cute and effective book.

Abigail says

Although she is Jewish, and loves many things about being Jewish - celebrating holidays like Passover, Rosh Hashanah and Hanukkah; observing Shabbat each week with family - Rachel Rubinstein also loves Christmas. She loves the twinkly lights, the Christmas trees, and the store windows of the season. When her letter to Santa, asking him to visit the Rosenstein house despite the fact that they are Jewish, doesn't produce the desired result, Rachel is crushed. Then her family's traditional Christmas-day dinner at the local Chinese restaurant demonstrates that she is not alone amongst her peers, in not celebrating this seemingly ubiquitous holiday...

This new holiday tale from actress Amanda Peet and first-time author Andrea Troyer begins promisingly enough, capturing the feelings of a child who witnesses the wonder of the Christmas season, but feels left out, "like a kid in a candy story with no mouth." I was reminded of Pauline Chen's Peiling and the Chicken-Fried Christmas, a middle-grade novel which chronicles the holiday travails of a young Chinese-American girl who experiences a similar feeling of exclusion at Christmas-time. Unfortunately, the conclusion of Dear Santa, Love, Rachel Rosenstein, which I have seen criticized for its return to feelings of exclusion, rather than a focus on the diverse array of non-Christian experiences at this time of year, felt a little muddled to me. I think the final page, in which Rachel and her family still feel a little bit left out, is meant to be humorous, and can be read that way. Still, although I wasn't bothered by it, and didn't feel, as some other online reviewers seem to have done, that it sent the wrong 'message,' I do think it weakened the emotional impact of the ending, in which Rachel ostensibly discovers that there is a diverse range of people who, like her, do not celebrate Christmas. Reactions will vary, of course, and this is still a fairly engaging holiday tale, one which deals with a theme - feeling left out - too seldom explored, and which is colorfully and engagingly illustrated, so I would recommend that readers give it a try, and see what they think.

Casandria says

Rachel is Jewish, but she's obsessed with Christmas! Lots of fun and with a good message.

Bethel says

I liked this book and thought it did a good job addressing a tough situation through a child's eyes. It did feel as though the main character's parents didn't do too much to help her process but I also know that there is a lot of publisher pressure to make children be their own problem-solvers. All in all a good read that gives children a peek into the perspective of a child who doesn't celebrate Christmas but wishes she could.
